

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • WINTER 2013 — 2014

WINTER STORM 2013

Guard assists state after record blizzard



» TRAINING & SUPPORT

- Medics complete paramedic training
- Engineers work with U.K. soldiers

» OVERSEAS DUTY

- 152nd CSSB cleans up war remnants
- 129th MPAD returns from OEF duty

» ACHIEVEMENT

- Soldier & NCO of the Year Announced
- Air Guard names new Command Chief





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Submissions: Print and photo submissions of general interest to members of the SDNG, their families, civilian employees, veterans and retirees are invited and encouraged. Please send article and photos with name, phone number, e-mail, complete mailing address and comments to: ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil, 605.737.6721. Submissions are subject to editing. Electronic submissions are preferred and digital photos should be at least 300 dpi.



DAKOTA PACK

Magazine of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard

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On the Cover

Soldiers and Airmen from the South Dakota National Guard provide support to electrical cooperative crews to restore power for residents in western South Dakota communities after an early October winter storm downed thousands of powerlines. (Photo illustration by Maj. Anthony Deiss)



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MESSAGE FROM THE STATE COMMAND SGT. MAJ.



I have had the distinct pleasure of being the voice of our Army National Guard Soldiers for five months now, and want to thank all of you for your thoughts, concerns and comments. I take every issue to heart, and work closely with Brig. Gen. Griese and Chief Master Sgt. Welch to ensure we capture your ideologies as they pertain to big Army guidance and policies.

In 2013, we have seen numerous changes come down from the Army and National Guard Bureau; structured self-development modules (SSD), promotions, the NCO education system (NCOES) and tuition assistance, to name a few. I wanted this opportunity to ensure everyone understands what has been accomplished by your leadership that will benefit you in the future.

A policy to cover compensation for electronic based distributed learning (EBDL) has been published. This policy has been enacted because we hear your concerns and frustrations with the increased demands of online training courses with no incentive to complete these. Talk to your leadership about your eligibility for this new incentive.

Promotions are another area of concern. The force structure to add more NCO positions, or change military specialties, is at a level higher than S.D. What we can help you with is allow you the opportunity to be promoted. Sgt. Maj. of the Army Chandler put into effect that on Jan. 1, 2015, Soldiers are not eligible to be considered for a promotion

list unless they have SSD and NCOES completed. The NCO leadership in S.D. did not feel this was a good policy for the National Guard, so we implemented the Select – Train – Promote – Assist policy that was in place pre-9/11. We agree you can be eligible for a promotion list and can be selected, however you must complete your SSD and NCOES before you are promoted.

The EPS packets this year included a DA Form 4856. This counseling form is a tool for leaders to use to get to know their Soldiers better. With the large number of suicides, we need to know each other, and communication is the key to a healthy relationship between Soldiers and leaders. Take time to cultivate a productive working relationship and your team will be strong enough to combat anything. Remember, communication flows from bottom to top and vice versa, so keep each other informed about your work and personal lives and plans for the future.

You all are volunteers ready to defend our nation, and for that, I thank you. Since 9/11, the military has grown, but now we will be part of the drawdown. Benefits have already started to shrink, so I encourage you all to be active in EANGUS so our voices can be heard. We all get opportunities to work hard and succeed which makes us very fortunate. Continue to create a positive environment and cultivate productive working relationships. Thank you for all you do and for all you sacrifice. Happy holidays to you and your families!

Sincerely,

State Command Sgt. Maj. SDARNG

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Doctors say tobacco users are 2 times more likely to quit if they use a quit coach.



Tobacco. There's no freedom in it.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADJUTANT GENERAL



I want to start out by wishing everyone a very joyous holiday season. This time of year is traditionally marked with special family gatherings. Fortunately, the returns of the 129th MPAD, 152nd CSSB and 235th MP Company came just in time to facilitate many festive celebrations in National Guard households across South Dakota. On the other side of the coin, the 1742nd Transportation Company has just embarked on their deployment to Afghanistan. Please join me in keeping all of our deployed Soldiers and Airmen in your daily prayers. I won't rest until we get everyone back home safely.

As calendar year 2103 comes to a close, it is fitting to stop and briefly reflect on what the year has meant to the South Dakota National Guard. For much of the year we had more than 200 Soldiers and Airmen deployed. We also had a few state activations this year fighting a limited number of fires, providing support following Ellsworth's B-1 bomber crash in Montana and responding to Winter Storm Atlas.

On the down side, we closed armories in a few of the most loyal and dedicated Guard communities in South Dakota due to force structure cuts, and more than 500 of our dedicated full-time federal technicians were sent home on unpaid furlough status because of budget cuts. In spite of these and other challenges we faced along the way, we end the year in great shape. Commanders and NCOs at all levels have worked hard to achieve high training and readiness standards. This professionalism certainly had a direct correlation to our finishing the year with no loss of life or serious injury.

I would like to publicly commend the leadership of both the South Dakota Air and Army National Guard for completing another great year in recruiting and retention. As the war winds down in Afghanistan, recruiting has become more of a challenge for a variety of reasons. In times like this, retaining the high-quality Soldiers and Airmen who are currently in our ranks becomes more important than ever. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed. By continuing to place emphasis in this area, we will be ready in the event of a no-notice state or federal activation.

I want to personally congratulate and thank Chief Master Sergeant Kevin Uthe on his retirement from the Wing chief position at the 114th Fighter Wing. His decades of dedication and hard work have directly contributed to the Wing's success over the years. Congratulations to Chief Master Sergeant Dean Hillberg on his selection as the new Wing chief. He is exceptionally well qualified and without question will do a great job in the years ahead.

Much of my time recently has been spent communicating with the other adjutants general and with the chief of the National Guard Bureau regarding the next round of budget cuts that will impact the Department of Defense. As I type these words, we are in the third month of the federal fiscal year, but we do not yet know what our budget allocation will be. Many of my counterparts and I believe that the National Guard and Reserve should be given deference from the most severe cuts because we cost a fraction of what the active component does. We are able to maintain significantly more force structure in the reserve components than we can in the active component for the same cost. Furthermore, history has shown that when we lose force structure due to budget cuts, we don't get it back.

I personally met with Senator Johnson, Senator Thune and Congresswoman Noem in the past few weeks to request that they do what they can to support continued funding for the National Guard. They have all provided strong support in the past, and I fully expect that support will continue.

It is absolutely critical that we continue to work hard to maintain peak readiness levels. In the event budget cuts are levied against the National Guard, those units that have substandard personnel, training and maintenance readiness levels will likely be targeted more harshly. The South Dakota National Guard has a tremendous legacy and a great reputation nationwide. We must continue to work diligently to reduce the likelihood of significant budget and force structure cuts. Thank you in advance for your continued hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,

The Adjutant General



The Brookings County Veterans Affairs Committee presented their 2013 Soldier of the Year Awards at the Veterans Day program in Brookings on Nov. 11. From left to right are Maj. Joe Hardin, Officer of the Year; Cadet Dalton DeBoer, Soldier of the Year and Staff Sgt. Barb Boyer, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

BROOKINGS COUNTY SOLDIER OF THE YEAR AWARDS PRESENTED AT VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

BROOKINGS – The Brookings County Veterans Affairs Committee presented their 2013 Soldier of the Year Awards at the Veterans Day program in Brookings on Nov. 11. Three Soldiers and one civilian were selected to receive the award. These Soldiers were nominated by other Soldiers and civilians in the community of Brookings.

This year's winners are; Soldier of the Year Cadet Dalton DeBoer of the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion and a member of the SDSU Army ROTC; Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Staff Sgt. Barb Boyer of the 115th Signal Company; Officer of the Year Maj. Joe Hardin of the 114th Fighter Wing, and Civilian of the Year Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Leo Sterling.

These Soldiers and civilian were selected for their involvement in both the military and their community. This award was created to recognize Brookings County military personnel who excel in selected areas of endeavor and are serving in the National Guard, Reserve and active duty, ROTC cadets and recruiters. Military personnel can be assigned to duty within the city of Brookings, or could have a duty station in another city outside of Brookings County or even in another state. The award also provides recognition to a Brookings County civilian who excels in support of military personnel or family of Brookings County military personnel. This award aids in development and strengthening of a mutual sense of "esprit" within Brookings County between civilians and the military.

HELICOPTER CREW ASSISTS INJURED MAN

DEADWOOD – A South Dakota Army National Guard helicopter crew assisted a Belle Fourche man who fell off an embankment near Mount Roosevelt in Deadwood on Nov. 6, according to the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office. The Guard crew hoisted the man out of the forest and transported him to Rapid City Regional Hospital where he was treated for injuries.

Alex Baker was part of a crew marking Pine Beetle trees when the accident happened. Other members of the crew stayed with him until the Guard helicopter was able to airlift him out.

Other agencies responding were Lawrence County Search and Rescue, Emergency Management, Deadwood Ambulance and Lifeflight.

GUARD MEMBERS VOLUNTEER TO HELP COMMUNITY

STURGIS – Ten local South Dakota National Guard Soldiers volunteered to assist the City of Sturgis with tree cleanup on Oct. 21. The volunteer Soldiers are or were members of units based in the Sturgis Brown High School and on Fort Meade and use the city bike path regularly, said volunteer 1st Sgt. Scott Rosenkranz.

"They saw the need to help cut trees and limbs to clear it for use again, so everyone brought their own equipment, saws, ladders and strong backs," he said.

The day began that morning at the Sturgis Community Center cleaning up there, the task was to cut and limb the broken branches to make them small enough for others to remove. The group then moved to the part of the bike path out by the "S" curves and made that area passable. When this was completed they moved to the cemetery where there was extensive tree damage, this area was where the day was finished.

Soldiers assisting in the clean-up effort were 1st Sgt. Scott Rosenkranz, 196th Regiment, (RTI), Maj. Tom Nelson, 109th Regional Support Group; Staff Sgt. Chas Larsen, Recruiting and Retention Command, Maj. Dana Limbo, 881st Troop Command, Sgt. 1st Class David Murtha, 881st TC, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow, 881st TC, Staff Sgt. David Fischer, 881st TC, Staff Sgt. Josh Guthmiller, 881st TC, Sgt. Nate Williamson, 881st TC and Sgt. Louis Clement, 881st TC.

Immediately following the Oct. 4 winter storm that left more than three feet of snow on the area and much devastation, 130 Soldiers and Airmen were called to state active duty from Oct. 5-20 to support local citizens. They helped to clear road ways, remove snow and assist electrical cooperative crews with gaining access to locations needing power lines repaired.



Maj. Scott Ecklund.
(Photo by Sgt. Charlie Jacobson)

SANFORD DOCTOR, DISTRICT 25 HOUSE REP. JOINS SD GUARD

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

SIOUX FALLS – For 30 years, Dr. Scott Ecklund has been practicing family medicine and providing quality healthcare to South Dakota families. Ecklund, 58, begins a new chapter in his medical profession as the most recent physician to join the South Dakota Army National Guard.

When not examining patients at Sanford Health in Sioux Falls, Ecklund will put his medical expertise to work providing medical care for Soldiers. Wearing the rank of major, Ecklund will substitute his traditional white lab coat for an Army combat uniform and will serve with the 730th Area Support Medical Company of Vermillion.

“I think men and women in today’s military have performed brilliantly – in everything that we have asked them to do – and sometimes we’ve asked so much and give them back so little,” said Ecklund, a resident of Brandon. “That makes me really want to try to help out and is why I decided to join.”

Ecklund also serves in the S.D. Legislature in the House of Representatives for District 25. In his first year of the Legislature, Ecklund met a fellow legislator who also serves in the National Guard. It’s here where he first considered joining the Guard.

“When I was out at the Legislature in January, I met Jim Seward and we talked about the National Guard. We have a National Guard breakfast where they invite all the legislators to come and hear about what the Guard does,” said Ecklund. “That’s why I decided to do it. I was shocked that they would actually take an old guy like me, but they did.”

Ecklund said he always wanted to serve in military. His father served during the Korean War in the Navy.

“He was actually in the Seabees, and he was stationed in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay,” said Ecklund of his father’s service. “That’s the only military connection that I really have. I always hear his stories about being in the military; he was a 20 year-old kid when he was in.”

Now, Ecklund will be telling stories to his kids and grandkids; he has four children, four grandchildren and a fifth on the way – all with his wife of 30 years, Alison.

So at 58 years of age, Ecklund is making up for lost time. A native of Minnetonka, Minn., just outside of Minneapolis, Ecklund came to South Dakota after high school and went to Augustana College in 1974.

“I have been here ever since I went to medical school,” said Ecklund. “After I graduated Augustana, I attended medical school

at the University of South Dakota, did my residency in Sioux Falls and married a Sioux Falls girl. South Dakota is my home.”

Ecklund says he always wanted to serve in the military, but the timing never quite worked out. When he graduated high school, Vietnam was winding down.

“Vietnam was kind of done and there was no real need for people to enlist. Right after college I went to medical school, started residency and then started practicing,” said Ecklund. “I have always felt like I missed something because I never served. I would be at banquets and people would say, ‘Would those in our armed forces please stand up,’ and people would applaud. I always thought I wish I would have served in some way.”

Now that Ecklund finally has his opportunity to serve his state and nation, he looks forward to the experiences he will have.

“I know that if there is a deployment opportunity, I would welcome the chance to go. Not that I want to go to war or anything, but I want to be there to help,” said Ecklund. “I think that I have enough experience over the years with counseling and dealing with all kinds of issues being in family medicine. I think I can actually help some of these young people that are either wounded, have some stress problems or PTSD. I look forward to being able to help in that regard.”

Either in his role as a doctor or as a legislator, helping and serving people is something Ecklund knows well and is something he looks forward to for as long as he is able.

“They say they have waived me and I can serve in the Guard until I’m 68, so I am going to go and see what it is like and hopefully be able to help some people out,” said Ecklund. “Maybe it’s not for me and if it isn’t I guess I’ll look for something else, but so far all indications seem to be that it is the right decision for me to make.”





A National Guard student attends a class at the University Center Rapid City. The UCRC boasts the highest percentage of military-affiliated students among South Dakota's State schools. Many military members, their family members and veterans attend classes at the UCRC, and are supported by activities of the Veteran's Club on the small campus.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck)

UNIVERSITY CENTER IS HOME TO MANY MILITARY STUDENTS

By Staff Sgt. Michael Beck — SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – The Veteran's Resource Center located in the South Dakota University Center in Rapid City (UCRC) has seen much growth since it opened March 15. The center is home to the Rapid City-based chapter of the Veteran's Club, which is based at Black Hills State University.

The small campus boasts a very large number among South Dakota's state universities; the highest percentage of military affiliated students, according to Susie Leahy, UCRC student support specialist. Leahy says nearly 15 percent of the students attending classes at the UCRC are military members, veterans or dependants.

A majority of the degree and certificate programs offered at the UCRC are administered by BHSU; however Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota add a wide compliment of programs. Being located in Rapid City makes the UCRC convenient to both Ellsworth Air Force Base and Camp Rapid, which accounts for the large percentage of military-affiliated students.

With nearly 30 undergraduate programs, 10 master's programs and two doctoral degrees offered at UCRC, the campus boasts a wide-variety of educational choices. This makes it a perfect haven for military-affiliated students, who may transition between communities and are frequently non-traditional students. The center also provides dedicated services to those students who are using their military or veteran's educational benefits.

Within the Veteran's Club, there is also access to tutoring services, something that was identified early on as a need for student-veterans.

"We started the semester in pre-basic algebra with a pretty full class, about half of it veterans," said Josh Kosola, president of the UCRC Veteran's Club. "By the end of the semester, there were only two vets left."

After bringing this to the attention of Leahy, Josh and Mark Quasney, both student-veterans, formed an extension of the Veteran's Club based at BHSU.

"The biggest thing we do is help veterans figure out how to access their benefits," said Mark.

The UCRC and the Veteran's Club have plans to expand their outreach to Ellsworth.

"We received a military outreach grant," said Leahy. "We would like to use that to reach more of the military members and families at Ellsworth and in the National Guard."



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South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier Staff Sgt. David Hughes, second from left, is presented with the National Defense Transportation Association's Instructor of the Year award for 2013 at ceremony Nov. 3 at the 2nd Battalion (Modular Training), 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute in Sioux Falls. The award honors the best instructor in each of the service transportation schools. Also pictured from left: Col. Tim Moran, SDARNG state training officer, Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell D. Brush, senior enlisted advisor for the National Guard Bureau, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Jim Welch, SDNG senior enlisted leader. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Jessica Bak)

SD GUARDSMAN NAMED TOP INSTRUCTOR FOR NATIONAL AWARD

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

SIOUX FALLS – A South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier was named the National Defense Transportation Association's Instructor of the Year for 2013. Staff Sgt. David Hughes, of Harrisburg, is an instructor in the SDARNG's 2nd Battalion (Modular Training), 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) in Sioux Falls.

The NDTA Instructor of the Year award honors the best instructor in each of the service transportation schools. Hughes was selected due to his exceptional character and performance while upholding the highest traditions of logistics instruction as an instructor for the 88M Motor Transport Operator Course.

"His presence and instruction significantly contributed to 2nd Battalion receiving an exceptional rating during its recent U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command accreditation," said State Command Sgt. Maj. Susan Shoe, senior noncommissioned officer for the SDARNG. "Staff Sgt. Hughes is a one-on-one mentor who leads by example as an instructor, leader and role model. He truly exemplifies the Transportation Corps' motto 'Spearhead of Logistics' in all he does."

Hughes has been an instructor with 2nd Battalion since January 2011. He has maintained a 100 percent graduation rate, 98 percent first-time pass rate on written exams, and a 100 percent first-time pass rate on performance exams for all classes he instructed.

"Hughes is a technical and tactical expert who has the ability to communicate the 88M10 duties and responsibilities, as well as motivate his students to excel," said Shoe, who also serves as the state's senior logistics NCO. "He uses examples and tools from the operating environment to allow his students to develop as adaptive, thinking Soldiers, as well as make training more realistic and exciting."

The NDTA is a non-political, non-profit educational association of government, military and industry professionals dedicated to fostering a strong and efficient global logistics and transportation system in support of national security, according to the organization's fact sheet.

Some of the organizations key goals are to advance knowledge and science of logistics and transportation, facilitate knowledge sharing of logistics and transportation between government and industry and educate members on important issues affecting global logistics and transportation.

"Staff Sgt. Hughes is a one-on-one mentor who leads by example as an instructor, leader and role model."

- State Command Sgt. Maj. Shoe

SOUTH DAKOTA GUARD UNIT CLEANS UP REMNANTS OF AFGHANISTAN WAR

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen — 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



South Dakota Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class John Kramer, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, of Philip, and North Carolina Army Reserve Spc. David Bryan, 846th Transportation Company, of Aberdeen, N.C., verify numbers on the data plate of a container for the international database at Kandahar Airfield Oct. 9.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — After 12 years of shipping supplies to troops in Afghanistan a surplus of containers have filled bases throughout the country.

During the South Dakota Army National Guard's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion recent deployment to Afghanistan, the unit not only worked to sustain the four transportation units and ordnance company they managed at Kandahar Airfield, but they also helped units in Regional Command-South drawdown equipment.

"I have heard that there are up to 80,000 containers in Afghanistan," said Maj. David Moore, support operations officer, of Rapid City. "Our goal is to help reduce the number of containers by identifying whether or not they need to be demolished for scrap metal or reused for packing up equipment to send home."

Ninety-five percent of the containers coming in and out of Kandahar Airfield will go to the Central Receiving Shipping Point where the containers are inspected.

There are three categories for the containers: one is "sea worthy" where it can be shipped back to the states by a ship; the second is "intra-theater," meaning the container is not good enough to go back on a ship but can be used inside the country; and "demolished," which means it is only good for scrap.

The 152nd moved the containers at a hectic pace, eliminating more than 1,200 in three weeks alone, said Moore.

A hectic pace is what kept Sgt. 1st Class John Kramer, noncommissioned officer in charge, CRSP, of Philip, busy from dawn to dusk.



South Dakota Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Adam Holen, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, of Volga, operates a rough terrain container handler to place a container onto the back of a palletized load system with the guidance from Maryland Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Jim Blakeley, 1129th Transportation Company, at Kandahar Airfield Oct. 8.



South Dakota Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Adam Holen, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, of Volga, operates a rough terrain container handler to move containers with guidance from two Soldiers from the Maryland Army National Guard's 1129th Transportation Company, at Kandahar Airfield Oct. 8.

"There is a lot more to containers than I ever thought," said Kramer. "When you are going down the highway back home and see a container on a truck you don't think about it. You don't know what it is hauling or what the numbers mean. Now, I look at a container and know if its sea worthy or if it needs to be demolished."

Kramer has a list of things he looks for when inspecting a container.

"Checking for holes in the containers is the biggest thing, and it also gets down to the nitty gritty of how many dents it has," he said. "The doors need to have a tight seal. We also check the numbers on the container to ensure the container is accounted for on the international database, which tracks the ownership of the container."

Lt. Col. David Bedard, deputy commanding officer, 15th Sustainment Brigade, Fort Bliss, Texas, said the 152nd will have contributed to 30 percent of their overall reduction.

"The 152nd has gone above and beyond," said Bedard. "They really are a stellar organization. From all accounts, when you look at these guys they are just stellar."

129TH SOLDIERS HOME FOR Thanksgiving

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – A welcome home ceremony for 11 Soldiers of the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, South Dakota Army National Guard, was held Nov. 27 at Camp Rapid in Rapid City. The unit returned home after a nine-month tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit deployed last February to Fort Dix, N.J. to complete their pre-mobilization training before proceeding to Afghanistan.

Maj. Wayne Asscherick, 129th commander, described the mission of the unit in Afghanistan.

“(One) part of our mission was to perform media embeds,” he said. “We embedded more than 200 civilian media with our combat troops.”

The mission of the Rapid City-based 129th was to manage the media embed program, advise and assist in training Afghan National Army personnel in public affairs operations and to record and report the events taking place in their area of responsibility throughout the country. The 129th was assigned to three locations in the 101st Airborne Division’s sector of Afghanistan.

“During our deployment, we collected hundreds of hours of video and took thousands of pictures to tell the story,” said Asscherick.

Speakers for the ceremony included Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Brig. Gen. Kevin Griesse, assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG.

“Thank you for doing a challenging job in a not so friendly place,” said Daugaard. “Thank you Soldiers of the 129th for giving me freedom.”

Two teams within the MPAD were responsible for assisting the Afghan National Army to promote a sense of stability among the general populous.

“Two of our teams worked with the Afghan National Army,” said Asscherick. “They trained them on how to communicate with the public in order to gain their confidence.”

Daugaard summed up the mission of the MPAD in his remarks.

“Without military public affairs the world would not know the story,” said Daugaard. “One day, you will all be a part of the ‘Day in History.’”



Gov. Dennis Daugaard shakes hands with Staff Sgt. Julieanne Morse, a member of the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, South Dakota Army National Guard, during the unit’s welcome home ceremony on Nov. 27 at Camp Rapid in Rapid City.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck)



The 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, South Dakota Army National Guard, is recognized at a welcome home ceremony on Nov. 27 at Camp Rapid in Rapid City. Eleven members of the 129th returned from a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan, where they provided public affairs and media support to the 101st Airborne Division. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck)

“Thank you Soldiers of the 129th for giving me freedom.”
- Gov. Daugaard

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COMMAND CHIEF BRUSH VISITS THE SOUTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD

By 2nd Lt. Jessica Bak — 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

JOE FOSS FIELD – Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush, senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the National Guard Bureau, visited the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard Nov. 13.

During his visit, he participated in the 114th Fighter Wing's Hometown Hero Salute ceremony. This recognized 162 Airmen who have participated in contingency operations for 30 days or longer since 9/11. The Hometown Hero Salute campaign is unique because it not only honors Airmen, but also the family and community who make sacrifices alongside those who wear the uniform.

Chief Brush reinforced the importance of the Hometown Heroes Salute ceremony while speaking to unit members.

"Take care of yourself, take care of your future and most importantly take care of your families," emphasized Brush. "You need to let the people closest to you know what you do every single day. Don't forget to say thank you to your families when you get home from drill."

Chief Brush also discussed how the intrusive leadership style he learned in security forces has helped him succeed throughout his career. His supervisor at that time would call him several times a month, in between drills, just to check in and see how he was doing.

"We are in the business of getting in people's business. It's about caring for your subordinates, and caring about your supervisors. I think we have to convince other people that this is the way we do business," said Brush.

"We inspect and maintain our aircraft, but that shouldn't be any different from the platform that is sitting in this room right now,"



Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush, senior enlisted advisor to the chief of National Guard Bureau, shakes hands with Airman First Class Daniel Tribby during the Hometown Hero Salute held at Joe Foss Field Nov. 2. Chief Brush was on hand as over 150 members of the 114th Fighter Wing received their Hometown Heroes Awards. Also pictured is the South Dakota National Guard Senior Enlisted Leader, Chief Master Sgt. James Welch. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland)

Brush told members of the 114th Security Forces Squadron. "Our people are the most important platform, and we have to maintain them as well. We can't bend or break each other.

"We need to take care of each other," added Brush. "Taking care of each other is reflective of the strong noncommissioned officer corps in the National Guard. We have to keep our force invigorated, keep our people sharp and keep them involved. Some part time members travel 300 miles away from their home and families to serve in the National Guard. We want our members to be excited about the things that they do here.

"This job is a noble job, because you take care of people," said Brush.

114TH FIGHTER WING NAMES NEW COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT

By 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



(Chief Hillberg lives in rural Colton with his wife, Teresa. They have four children; Kurt, Caryn, Carolyn and Kristian.) Chief Master Sgt. Dean Hillberg accepts the guidon of the 114th Fighter Wing from Col. Russ Walz, 114th Fighter Wing commander, during a change of authority ceremony at Joe Foss Field Nov. 2. Chief Hillberg was selected to replace retiring Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Uthe as the 114th Fighter Wing command chief. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland)

JOE FOSS FIELD – The 114th Fighter Wing will start 2014 out with a new senior enlisted leader. Chief Master Sgt. Dean Hillberg, labor relations specialist with the South Dakota National Guard, has been selected to replace retiring Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Uthe as the Wing's newest command chief master sergeant. Chief Uthe retired in November 2013 with more than 36 years of military service.

"To serve on Col. Walz' leadership team as the 114th Fighter Wing enlisted representative is a humbling honor," said Hillberg. "I look forward to serving the enlisted force and increasing awareness of programs, which will aid in the retention and development of current unit members and recruitment of new personnel."

After serving four years on active duty with the Air Force, Chief Hillberg joined the South Dakota Air National Guard in July 1985. He has worked in areas from maintenance to recruiting to human resources and personnel. His broad range of experience will serve all enlisted members of the unit well.

EMERGENCY ALERT

By Senior Master Sgt. Richard Larson — 114th Fighter Wing

JOE FOSS FIELD – The South Dakota Air National Guard commanders can boast that unit members are truly “dialed in” when it comes to knowing what’s going on. That’s because the 114th Fighter Wing is first base in the Air National Guard to fully implement the new Desktop ALERT mass notification system. The system is a joint effort of Emergency Management, Communications Flight and the Base Command Post.

From severe weather to any major threats, when seconds count, the Joe Foss Field Desktop ALERT (DTA) system can blast out a message to thousands of Airmen regardless of location. It’s all about the lightning bolt, which is the symbol for the notification system many on base recognize from the bottom of their base computer screens. Not just base monitors, Desktop ALERT can also send messages to member’s cell phones, smartphones, Blackberries, home computers, laptops and tablets. It’s a powerful system that ensures when important word about anything has to go out, members will get it fast! Just register with the system and you’ll get updates.

“It’s a rapid and thorough system for getting information out to the base population quickly and efficiently,” said Senior Master Sgt. Rick Larson, 114th Fighter Wing emergency manager. The system also interfaces with existing alert beacons and situational awareness monitors. It will eventually tie into the base Giant Voice PA system.

Larson said the Desktop ALERT system has been running at Joe Foss Field for the past year and a half, and it couldn’t be working out much better.



Situational awareness monitors have been placed strategically throughout Joe Foss Field so that all members, regardless of their work environment, have immediate access to emergency information. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland)

“We’ve received a benchmark for how we’ve integrated warning systems from the Pentagon,” he said, referring to a recent visit from a DoD evaluation team.

Development of such systems was underway following 9/11, and then the Fort Hood active shooter incident hastened the DoD to have full implementation standards.

“We use it on a daily basis,” said Larson. “It’s used whenever there is a threat to our personnel, mission and equipment.”

All base computers automatically get DTA notices and alerts. The system is persistent, prompting the attention of the person getting the message and requiring them to acknowledge receipt before the alert message will leave them alone - or until the next message goes out.

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SD GUARD UNIT FINE-TUNES DEPLOYMENT PREPARATION

Story and photos by Robert Schuette — Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

FORT MCCOY, Wis. — A South Dakota Army National Guard unit spent two-and-one-half weeks conducting premobilization training at Fort McCoy in preparation for its overseas deployment.

The 1742nd Transportation Company of Sioux Falls, with a detachment in Flandreau, completed a wide variety of training in early October, said Maj. James Linn of the South Dakota Army National Guard Premobilization Training Assistor Element.

“Unit members conducted convoy training, entry control point (ECP) training, combat life saver (CLS) training, land navigation and training with individual and crew-served weapons,” he said.

“The support we’ve received from everyone at Fort McCoy to make our training successful has been top-notch,” Linn said. “(The Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security) has provided us with whatever additional training opportunities they can, as well to ensure our training helps us accomplish the mission.”

Staff Sgt. Ryan Hawks, a team leader for the 1742nd, said the ECP training was exceptional.

“It helps us know what to look for, who to let in or keep out and is great training for the Soldiers,” Hawks said. “Some of them are right out of AIT (Advanced Individual Training) so they only have seen this information in books or in the classroom. This lets them see how it works.”

Hawks said even though he had previously deployed he continued to learn new skills during this training.

Sgt. Paul McKinstry, a truck driver for the 1742nd, said the ECP training taught the unit the standard procedures and how to perform when manning an ECP.

“We can stop and talk about it,” he said. “The combat life saver training at the Medical Simulation Training Center also was well presented. It was good, they made it life-like. The simulation was unbelievable, and the best way to learn was to put the skills into action.”

Pfc. Danika Johnson, a refueler/maintenance Soldier who joined the unit from the 740th Transportation Company, said the unit members helped her fit right in.

“This is my first drill on this since basic training,” Johnson said. “They’re making everything more realistic and helping me get up to speed quickly.”

Sgt. 1st Class Joel Marotz, an assistant truck master for the 1742nd, said the Soldiers conducted weapons training with a variety of crew-served and individual weapons, such as the MK-19 grenade launcher. Soldiers trained in a mounted and dismounted state with the weapon.

“The CLS training was awesome,” he said. “The goal is to have everyone 100 percent trained in this. This is the first time in (my) 25 years (career) I have trained at Fort McCoy. The facilities here are top-notch.”



Members of the 1742nd Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, train on combat life saver skills Oct. 8 at the Medical Simulation Training Center, building 1024, at Fort McCoy, Wis.



Members of the 1742nd Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, train with MK-19 grenade launchers Oct. 9 at Range 26 at Fort McCoy, Wis.



Members of the 1742nd Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, train on entry control point procedures at Military Urban Training Site-South Oct. 10 at Fort McCoy, Wis.



SD GUARD EXPLORES PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH TRIBES

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

PIERRE – Leaders from the South Dakota National Guard met with representatives from several Native American tribes in Pierre Nov. 14, to discuss partnership opportunities for community service projects on their reservations.

Representatives from the Yankton, Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes listened to briefings on the role and capabilities of the Guard, and how they are able to support communities with engineer construction, material transportation and medical support services.

Both Guard leaders and tribal members saw the meeting as an opportunity to generate awareness of Guard services, what some of the needs are on the reservations and how they can work together.

“We wanted to engage the tribes to enter into a partnership with the South Dakota National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. “The partnership would involve the National Guard conducting training on the reservations that would result in improvements to the infrastructure, such as road development, construction services, providing medical care and other types of support that are consistent with the missions of the Guard.”

“It was a very good and informative meeting,” said Kevin Keckler, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. “I’m very interested in some of the support the Guard can assist us with.”

From left: Capt. Mitch Nachtigall and Senior Master Sgt. James Volden, of the South Dakota National Guard, listen to Richard Leasure and Everdale Songhawk, of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, talk about a community service project during a meeting to discuss partnership opportunities between the Guard and S.D. Native American tribes Nov. 14 in Pierre. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

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Capt. Mitch Nachtigall, of the South Dakota National Guard, briefs representatives from the Yankton, Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes about partnership opportunities with the South Dakota National Guard for community service projects through its Innovative Readiness Training program during a meeting Nov. 14 in Pierre. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

"It is really helpful to our community members to have that assistance from the National Guard," said Everdale Songhawk, councilman for the Yankton Sioux Tribe. "The relationship with the Guard continues with our people and we want to continue to work together, meet our goals and complete some projects."

Some of the potential projects discussed included medical screenings and examinations, veterinarian services, firewood transportation and road construction and maintenance.

"We have a cemetery that is built in a river valley and we continually have flooding issues every spring," said Keckler. "We are hoping to do a joint project with the Guard to create berms around the cemetery to prevent future flooding. We have a lot of veterans that are buried there, and I think it would mean a lot to our people to have that not happen anymore."

"We are looking at a boat ramp project in the Yankton area, as well as having some road work done at the Marty Indian School," said Songhawk.

The National Guard provides community services through its Innovative Readiness Training program, or IRT. The IRT program partners with local organizations to provide a benefit to communities while providing hands-on, readiness-training opportunities for the Guard and other U.S. military units throughout the country. The program is built upon the long-standing tradition of the National Guard, acting as good neighbors at the local level in applying military personnel to assist worthy civic and community needs.

"The National Guard is a community-based organization," said Reisch. "We want to go out and continue to partner with our communities so we can continue to have membership from a broad range of communities, as well as provide services to them."

Over the years, the National Guard has provided some public service projects for Native American communities to include delivering firewood and conducting Indian Health Services missions to the Pine Ridge, Crow Creek, Rosebud and Lower Brule reservations.



Representatives from the Yankton and Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes listen to a briefing about partnership opportunities with the South Dakota National Guard for community service projects through its Innovative Readiness Training program during a meeting Nov. 14 in Pierre. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

"The National Guard this summer brought more than 50 loads of firewood to our communities," said Keckler. "That was very helpful to us and it is evident today because we are into the winter heating season, and we haven't had many requests for wood, so the people that needed that wood got it. The Guard was also there to help with veterinary services – rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats – and that's always helpful."

The IRT program also focuses on providing service member training within their military occupational skill set, which includes carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, engineering, transportation, and all aspects of medical care. Resource support for projects is a shared responsibility between the military and community – the Guard provides the manpower while the community provides the materials and supplies. The Guard also ensures a project will not compete with local contractors or businesses.

"The partnership is a benefit to our organization because it allows our Soldiers and Airmen to perfect their skills and to do their missions in a new environment, which allows us to get better at our jobs while simultaneously providing a service to the Native American tribes," said Reisch.

"The partnership would involve the National Guard conducting training on the reservations that would result in improvements to the infrastructure."

- Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch

FLIGHT MEDICS ON PATH TO COMPLETE PARAMEDIC CERTIFICATION



Five flight medics from the South Dakota Army National Guard were recognized at a ceremony Oct. 31 at Camp Rapid in Rapid City for graduating from the National Registry Paramedic program through Western Dakota Technical Institute. The Soldiers will be some of the first in the nation to complete the alternative to the paramedic courses offered at the Army Medical Department Center and School by participating in the Home Station Paramedic Training Program. Pictured from left: Spc. Alyssa Weaver, Staff Sgt. Jared Sampson, Sgt. Adam Max, Staff Sgt. Joseph Larson and Sgt. Rachel Hobbs, all flight medics with Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck)

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – Five flight medics from the South Dakota Army National Guard are some of the first in the nation to complete the Home Station Paramedic Training Program, which allows Army flight medics to attain their National Registry Paramedic (NRP) certification close to home. The program is an alternative to the paramedic courses offered at the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School.

The Soldiers were recognized at a ceremony Oct. 31 at Camp Rapid for graduating from the NRP program through Western Dakota Technical Institute. The Soldiers are participants of a pilot program designed to train experienced flight medics at existing local NRP programs close to air ambulance units' or Soldiers' home of record.

The Home Station Paramedic Training Program is part of an Army initiative to attain NRP certification and critical care training of Army flight medics. The goal is to further enhance the level of pre-hospital trauma care available to Soldiers at or near the point of injury to treat and stabilize, as well as provide in-flight medical care to the critically injured while being transported aboard air ambulances during peacetime and combat operations.

The course is a National Guard Bureau endorsed Reserve component prototype, which replaces the nine-month active-duty component course conducted at Fort Sam Houston through the University of Texas in San Antonio. The training model aims to reduce costs and

increase the number of available seats for students to attend. The cost savings per student is projected to be about \$19,000.

“The focus of this program is the ability of our Soldiers to get this training close to home,” said Billi Jo Bierle, specialty branch officer for the 109th Regional Support Group. “Having them get the training locally eliminates the need for them to move for nine months. It saves money and allows the Soldiers to focus on their studies without leaving their home, family or Guard unit.”

“I don’t know if I would have been able to do the course if I had to leave for months to attend the school in Texas,” said Spc. Alyssa Weaver, of Spearfish. “It’s difficult to send students away for long periods of time, especially if they have kids, a spouse, job or career. It’s nice to be able to complete it here.”

Army Lt. Col. Paul Dueringer, aeromedical evacuation operations officer for the National Guard Bureau, who is overseeing the pilot program, said experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the requirement for an increased level of advanced pre-hospital trauma and critical care transport capability in Army medical evacuation units.

“An analysis of this emerging medical requirement indicates the most effective course of action towards achieving higher survival rates and improving patient outcomes is through NRP training and certification of Army flight medics,” said Dueringer. “This program is designed to help fulfill that requirement.”

The vast majority of Soldiers who die on the battlefield do so before reaching a physician, according to the Department of Defense’s Defense Manpower Data Center. The center’s analysis of medical evacuation mission requirements supports providing additional specialized advanced trauma management at or near the point of injury.

“The 92 percent survival rate in Afghanistan is the highest in history because of the efficiency and effectiveness of our unparalleled medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) capability and health service support network on the battlefield,” said Dueringer. “This program will help to ensure we maintain that level of proficiency.”

Dueringer says an Army National Guard MEDEVAC unit manned with registered National Registry Emergency Medical Technicians-Paramedics (NREMT-Ps) – civilian standard of care for life-flight – deployed to Afghanistan highlighted the impact the higher level of trauma and critical care training has on patient outcomes.

“Comparison of the survivability and patient outcomes between the standard flight medic (EMT-B) and California Army National Guard NREMT-P flight medics revealed that NREMT-Ps have a 66 percent higher survival rate,” said Dueringer. “It is estimated that 15-28 percent of all battlefield pre-hospital deaths are potentially salvageable with advanced trauma care capability.”

To help improve the survivability rate of Soldiers under their care, Staff Sgt. Joseph Larson, Staff Sgt. Jared Sampson, Sgt. Rachel Hobbs, Sgt. Adam Max, and Spc. Alyssa Weaver, all flight medics with Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment, began the six-month course at Western Dakota Tech. in May.

The five medics were on military orders and their primary duty was to attend class five days a week, with clinical labs. They also attended weekend drill training to maintain their flight qualifications as required by their unit commander.

“It’s been a short, but long road and the training was intense. It feels good to finally have this completed,” said Sgt. Adam Max, of Rapid City. “With a lot of us just getting back less than a year ago from a deployment overseas, this kind of paramedic training is greatly beneficial.”



Sgt. Adam Max, a flight medic with Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment, practices his paramedic skills at Western Dakota Technical Institute.

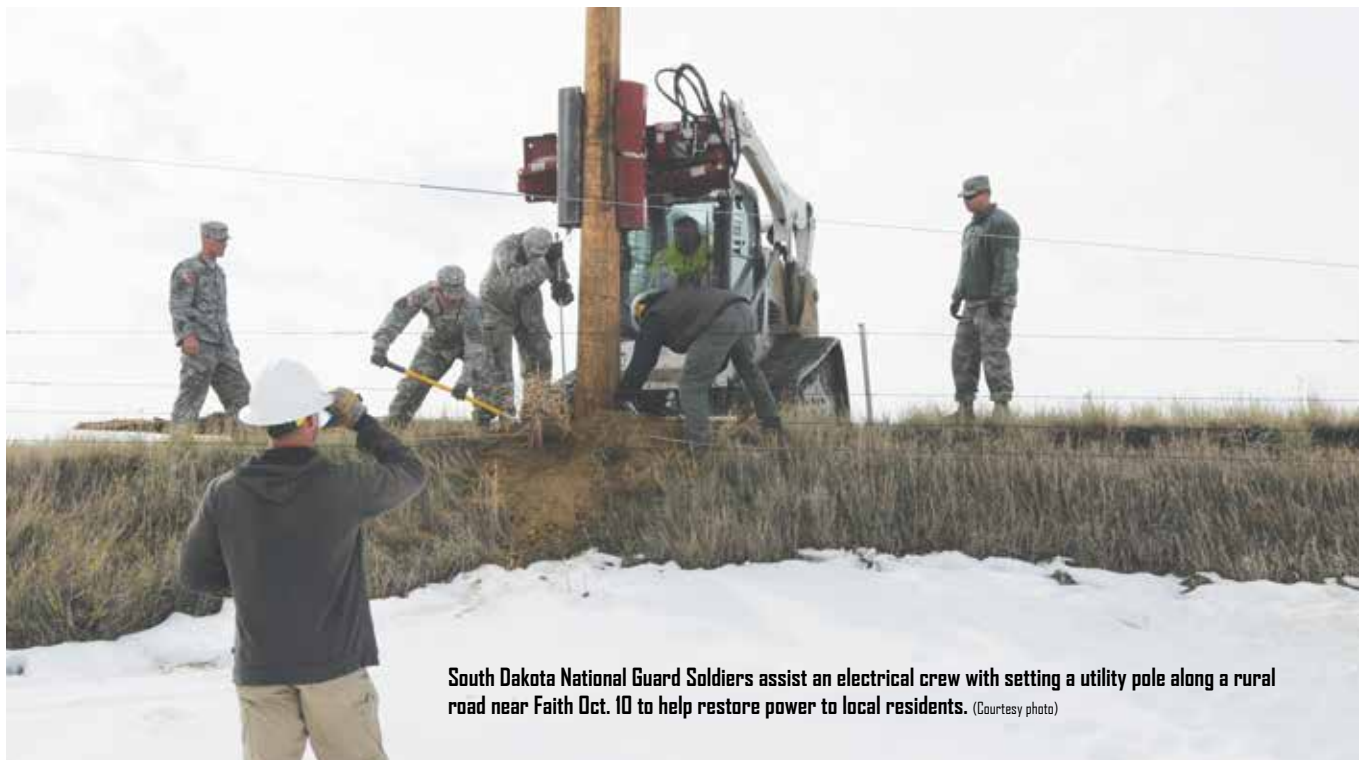


Sgt. Rachel Hobbs, a flight medic with Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment, practices her paramedic skills at Western Dakota Technical Institute.

“To go through the program here and have internships with local fire departments and paramedics and get a feel for critically injured patient care was very valuable,” said Weaver. “It was a lot of studying and we all worked really hard in class. It was a benefit that we could sit in our own couch and study.”

Dueringer says the success of this Army flight paramedic initiative will support three lines of effort.

First, it will significantly improve the ARNG’s pre-hospitalization trauma and critical care transport capability in support of its war-time poly-trauma patient transport mission; second, it supports interoperability with civilian medical counterparts by enhancing the ARNG’s ability to integrate planning and response efforts with local, state, and domestic operations partners; and third, it supports the Department of Defense Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force efforts in creating opportunities for service members to earn civilian occupational credentials and licenses.



South Dakota National Guard Soldiers assist an electrical crew with setting a utility pole along a rural road near Faith Oct. 10 to help restore power to local residents. (Courtesy photo)

SD GUARD SUPPORTS STATE IN WAKE OF

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

WINTER STORM

South Dakota National Guard members supported the state in aftermath of the Oct. 4 winter storm that crippled western South Dakota. About 130 Soldiers and Airmen were called to state active duty to support local citizens from Oct. 5-20 and helped to clear road ways, remove snow and assist electrical cooperative crews with gaining access to locations needing power lines repaired.

More than a dozen other full-time National Guard members also provided dedicated support to state active-duty personnel in response to the storm. About 20 separate missions were requested of the Guard during the operation which totaled 735 mandays.

Guard forces and equipment began responding immediately after the blizzard and sent to locations hardest hit in Harding, Meade, Perkins and Pennington counties. Equipped with snow blowers, front-end loaders, bulldozers, heavy expanded mobility tactical trucks and humvees, Guard members were dispatched locally and from across the state to help communities dig out from the record-breaking storm.



A South Dakota National Guard front-end loader from the 842nd Engineer Company pulls a West River Electric Association truck from the mud and snow along a rural road after repairing an electrical pole near Union Center Oct. 9. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

"Our Soldiers and Airmen are proud to be able to respond to local emergencies such as this," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "Our service in a state active-duty status like this is foundational to what the National Guard is all about."

Across the region, snow totals averaged 30 inches, with some isolated areas recording almost five feet, setting new snowfall records for October in the Black Hills and many western counties. Snow accumulation, along with freezing temperatures and winds gusts up to 70 mph, downed thousands of tree limbs and electrical power lines, blocked roadways and decimated livestock caught in the storm.

Local emergency management officials from multiple counties requested support to the state's emergency management office and the governor, who declared a state of emergency and activated National Guard forces to assist.

The call for Guard assistance came early the morning after the storm and coordination began immediately to bring in personnel and dig out equipment. With roads nearly impassable and no travel advised, several Soldiers trekked on foot several miles to reach the Guard headquarters on Camp Rapid in Rapid City to set up operations. Soldiers also trudged through deep snow in the towns of Belle Fourche and Sturgis to begin opening equipment yards. From across the state, Guard personnel from units in Aberdeen, Mobridge, Sioux Falls and Yankton were dispatched to deliver equipment and to help respond to recovery efforts.

According to local electrical companies, more than 38,000 customers suffered power losses throughout the storm and reported more than 3,800 downed power poles. While snow removal missions were completed in the first week after the storm, the Guard's efforts focused on supporting power crews who worked from house to house to restore electricity in rural areas; working alongside them pulling electrical bucket trucks out of the snow and mud after they worked on a utility pole.

Guard units providing state active-duty personnel to the storm recovery efforts included Alpha and Bravo Batteries of the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, 109th Regional Support Group, 842nd Engineer Company, 200th Engineer Company, 155th Engineer Company, Joint Force Headquarters and the 114th Fighter Wing.



A D7 bulldozer from the South Dakota National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company waits to assist an electrical crew repairing utility poles near Union Center Oct. 9. (Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)




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SD GUARD ENGINEERS BUILD PARTNERSHIP WITH UK SOLDIERS

Forty South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion traveled to the United Kingdom Sept. 13-28 to participate in a Reciprocal Unit Exchange Program, where they worked with British engineers from the 71 Engineer Regiment to construct a 150 meter-long viewing walkway in northern Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park, near Aviemore. (Photo courtesy of the 153rd Engineer Battalion)

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

South Dakota National Guardsmen are building a partnership with Soldiers from the United Kingdom. Forty Guardsmen traveled to Great Britain Sept. 13-28 to participate in the Army National Guard's Reciprocal Unit Exchange Program (RUE), where they had the opportunity to work with a foreign military.

Operating alongside U.K. regular Army and Territorial Army soldiers (Britain's equivalent of a National Guard force), the Guardsmen trained on their vertical-engineering skills during the construction of a viewing walkway in northern Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park.

The goal of the RUE program is to gain an understanding of the training, doctrine and operations of a major alliance partner.

"It is both a cultural and doctrinal program, as it affords U.S. Soldiers an opportunity to learn from our NATO partners," said Col. Tim Moran, state training officer for the SDNG. "It prepares our leaders and Soldiers to fully utilize troop leading procedures as they prepare for a deployment to a foreign country, ensure mission accomplishment and maintain the safety and accountability of their team."

Reciprocal unit exchanges involve the mutual exchange of company-size or smaller National Guard elements with designated units from foreign nations. The program is designed to improve participant knowledge of organization, equipment, structure and operational doctrine of the nation's reserve forces. Selected units perform the exchange in an annual training status.

Soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion spent their two-week annual training working with British engineers from the 71 Engineer Regiment, where they constructed a 150 meter-long, two meter-wide viewing walkway for the park.

"The only real way to get into the park was by driving," said 1st Lt. Kale Skogen, officer in charge of the Guard team. "The walkway creates a public access to the wildlife park for pedestrians."

During the project, the Soldiers dug post holes, set poles and framed and finished the walkway structure. The project was a unique learning opportunity.

"This was a great learning experience for our engineers," said Skogen, who is also the executive officer for the 211th Engineer Company. "Only about five of our Soldiers had any real carpentry experience, but the rest learned quickly and received great hands-on experience."

The project only took 10 days to complete. Skogen said the British soldiers were amazed at the efficiency and progress made by the Guardsmen during the project.

"They were truly amazed at the progressive pace in which we were able to accomplish the task, especially with our lack of vertical-construction skilled workers," said Skogen. "They admitted that their Soldiers would have not been able to complete this task in the given time of 10 days."

This project not only provides a benefit in enhancing work skills and coordination with a foreign military, but also provides a useful service to the public. Skogen said the project was ideal for the U.K. soldiers to help increase support with the British people.

"This was a high-publicity project where the public could see how the Army helps support its local community," said Skogen. "The people in the park really appreciated it, and the more good things the British military can do in the community the better."



South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion work with a United Kingdom soldier Sept. 22 as part of the Reciprocal Unit Exchange Program to construct a 150 meter-long viewing walkway in northern Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park, near Aviemore.
(Photo courtesy of the 153rd Engineer Battalion)

Skogen feels the Guard is developing a good partnership with the Brits and would like to see more integration with them on future exchanges.

"Going forward, I would like to see more integration with their troops – our guys working on their crews and vice versa, but we definitely got a chance to see how they conduct business and their leadership style," said Skogen. "The British were also very supportive and provided us with everything we needed to complete the project. They were very hospitable, courteous and made sure we were well taken care of."

This most recent exchange with Great Britain is just one of several in the past two years with the SDNG.

In September 2012, 38 engineers from the 211th Engineer Company members traveled to Germany to train with New Castle, England's 72 Engineer Regiment in the exercise Tyne Sapper 12. In June, about 50 members of the 72nd also participated in the SDNG's annual Golden Coyote training exercise held in the Black Hills. The SDNG has also held several other reciprocal unit exchanges with military forces from Germany and Denmark.

"From an interoperability aspect, it is a valuable experience for our Soldiers to be able to work alongside international soldiers – to learn their tactics and techniques, which differ slightly from ours," said Moran. "It may mean life or death during a future overseas contingency operation."



South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion work with United Kingdom Soldiers Sept. 22 to construct a 150 meter-long viewing walkway in northern Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park, near Aviemore. (Photo courtesy of the 153rd Engineer Battalion)



South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion work with United Kingdom Soldiers Sept. 22 to install the decking during the construction of a 150 meter-long viewing walkway in northern Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park, near Aviemore. (Photo courtesy of the 153rd Engineer Battalion)

The ARNG annually executes RUEs with the United Kingdom and other European nations using Department of the Army Memorandums of Understanding currently in place with each country as the legal authority to execute. The program also supports the Secretary of Defense Security Cooperation Guidance and the Theater Security Cooperation Plan with each respective country.

Both Moran and Skogen feel the program gives Guard units an excellent training opportunity with our closest NATO allies and serves to strengthen partnerships for years to come.

"The relationships and training experiences that we have with all our foreign allies are extremely important for us now and the future," said Moran. "It improves both organizations and makes us stronger and more relevant. It is and has been a great opportunity to train together and learn from each other in structured training exercises versus having to do it for the first time on the battlefield."

"This trip really opened our eyes to working with another foreign nation and improved our trust and confidence in working with our nation's ally," said Skogen. "The British really took great care of us and also exposed us to some of their great culture, traditions and local scenery. It's definitely a beneficial experience when you can work with a partner nation."



South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers Spc. Dalton DeBoer, left, of Clear Lake, Soldier of the Year and Staff Sgt. Sam Schaefer, of Watertown, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2013. Both Soldiers are members of Watertown's Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Becky Linder)

SD GUARD ANNOUNCES SOLDIER AND NCO OF THE YEAR

2013

By Staff Sgt. Michael Beck — SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota Army National Guard is pleased to announce Spc. Dalton DeBoer, of Clear Lake, as its Soldier of the Year and Staff Sgt. Sam Schaefer, of Watertown, as its Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2013. Both Soldiers are members of Watertown's Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion.

The NCO and Soldier of the Year titles are the top honors that can be bestowed upon enlisted personnel in the state's Army National Guard.

DeBoer and Schaefer were the top winners for the state's Army Guard Best Warrior Competition held in September. DeBoer and Schaefer battled against 33 other competitors in an series of events to include a written exam, essay writing, battle drills, M-16 rifle marksmanship, land navigation, obstacle course, six-mile road march (carrying a 40-pound pack) and a physical fitness test.

"The events embodied the whole Soldier concept," said State Command Sgt. Maj. Susan Shoe, senior NCO for the SDARNG. "They all had to know weapons, warrior tasks, board knowledge and the Warrior Ethos."

The next challenge ahead for DeBoer and Schaefer will be representing South Dakota in the Region 6 Best Warrior competition to be held May 18-22, 2014. The competition will be hosted by the SDARNG and take place in Rapid City. Competitors from six other states will join DeBoer and Schaefer to compete for the regional title. The winners of that competition will advance to the national Best Warrior Competition.

"It is a testament of their Army values and the Warrior Ethos that they didn't quit," Shoe remarked of Schaefer and DeBoer. "They definitely distinguished themselves as the best of the best."

Shoe also remarked about the spirit of the competition.

"The Soldiers who won the individual events had a determination, a winning spirit inside of them," said Shoe. "Yet there was a great deal of camaraderie, everyone was helping each other, supporting each other through the competition."

SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

Spc. DeBoer joined the National Guard in April of 2011 as a Multiple Launch Rocket System operations and fire direction specialist for the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion. He is a full-time student at South Dakota State University, majoring in construction management.

"I was interested in serving in some way and joined my junior year of high school," said DeBoer. "I enjoy the ROTC program at SDSU and hope to commission through the program and go to active duty after college."

An interest in learning, as well as dedication to physical fitness helped DeBoer win the Soldier of the Year title.

"I have always been interested in training and learning new things," said DeBoer. "I have always been interested in working out and training (physically)."

DeBoer also enjoys his free-time.

"I enjoy hunting and hanging out with my friends," said DeBoer. "ROTC takes up a lot of my time though."

As for the competition itself, DeBoer expressed pride in his accomplishment.

"I am proud to be competing in the regional competition," he said. "It is a big honor to represent the state."

NCO OF THE YEAR

Staff Sgt. Schaefer became a member of the National Guard in 2000 and serves as the training NCO for the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion.

Through his later years in school, Schaefer knew he wanted to serve in some way.

"My older sister had joined the Guard, that was what pushed me over the edge," said Schaefer. "I chose the National Guard over the other services because that is what she did."

Schaefer, who was selected as the alternate NCO to represent the 1-147th in the competition, reflected on what helped him be successful even though he had no time to train for the competition specifically.

"It is my daily routine that helped me succeed," he said. "The big thing that helped me is I have a good, general knowledge of (Soldier) skills and tasks."

Schaefer devotes a majority of his off-duty time to his family.

"My kids (Olivia, 9 and Noah, 6) take a lot of my time, and that is awesome," said Schaefer. "I do a lot of hunting and recreational shooting, but my family definitely comes first."

Schaefer also commented on the upcoming regional Best Warrior Competition.

"I look forward to doing the best I can no matter how I place," he said. "I am looking forward to the challenge of a higher level of competition."





Tech. Sgt. Thomas Kaffar, 114th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Crew Chief, stands ready as the F-16 aircraft he is responsible for prepares to launch for its mission with the 175th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron in Southwest Asia Aug. 12. More than 200 members of the unit spent over 60 days working, sometimes in temperatures of up to 120 degrees, to complete their mission. (Photo by Master Sgt. Kevin Winter)



Lt. Col. Gregory Lair, 175th Fighter Squadron commander, congratulates Tech. Sgt. Thomas Kaffar, 114th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, on being selected as the 175th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron monthly Superior Performer. Sgt. Kaffar was one of more than 200 members of the South Dakota Air National Guard who deployed in support of the U.S. Air Expeditionary Forces operations in southwest Asia and was nominated by his supervisor for his superior performance. (Photo by Master Sgt. Kevin Winter)

Members of the 114th Fighter Wing deployed to Southwest Asia in support of the U.S. Air Force's Air Expeditionary Force rotation plan pose for a photo with the aircraft they were responsible for during this operation. More than 200 members of the unit spent over 60 days working, sometimes in temperatures of up to 120 degrees, to complete their mission. (Photo by Master Sgt. Kevin Winter)





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